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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BUCHAREST 001219

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STATE DEPT FOR EUR/NCE - WILLIAM SILKWORTH

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TAGS: [MARR MASS PREL IS LE RO](#)

SUBJECT: ROMANIAN LIMITS IN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS,
THOUGHTS ON LEBANON

REF: SECSTATE 121375

Classified By: ADCM RODGER GARNER FOR REASONS 1.4 B AND D

¶11. (C) Summary. Despite popular sentiment in Romania that it is already stretched thin in contributing to peacekeeping operations overseas, decision makers appear cautiously optimistic that Romania would contribute to an international peace keeping force, should there be an UN mandate to stabilize Lebanon. Upon returning from Washington, President Basescu confirmed the cautiousness of this optimism by saying he had not yet committed Romania to participate in a military buffer force for Southern Lebanon, but would consider it. Minister of Defense Atanasiu, who recently advocated for the withdrawal of Romanian troops from Iraq, also made press statements that Romania would send troops to Lebanon, if requested and paid for by the United Nations. MOD and MFA officials promised to reply, albeit slowly, to reftel demarche's offer to participate in the Global Peace Operations Initiative. The diminishing MOD budget, not the Defense Minister's appeal for withdrawing troops from Iraq, appears to be the major constraining force on Romania's ability to contribute to peacekeeping operations. End Summary.

Training for Peacekeeping

¶12. (C) PolOff delivered reftel cable on engaging Romania in the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) to MOD Director for Strategic Affairs Mihaela Matei and MFA Acting Director for UN Affairs Eugen Mihut on July 27. Neither the MOD nor the MFA representatives appeared overly enthusiastic about the opportunity for training in peacekeeping operations. The MOD's Matei said she would forward the message to the General Staff, but focused her conversation on budgetary constraints within the MOD. She was encouraged to hear that there could be U.S. funding available, and said that would help determine the degree of Romania's likely positive answer. She said that it would likely take several weeks to formulate a reply. She also mentioned the difficult transition MOD would be undergoing as it ends conscription and wondered how that would affect Romania's ability to deploy troops for peacekeeping operations.

¶13. (C) The MFA's Mihut was much less enthusiastic, saying it would take more than a month for Romania to form a reply and that Romania is already stretched rather thin in just maintaining its current peacekeeping commitments. He quickly cited the MOD's budgetary restraints and limited number of people that could be deployed overseas. Mihut emphasized the political debate stemming from the center-right liberal party's campaign to remove troops from Iraq, and suggested it would be difficult for Romania to become further involved in

peacekeeping overseas.

Peacekeepers for Lebanon

¶4. (C) However, concerning the possibility of Romania deploying peacekeeping troops to Lebanon, MFA Director General for the Middle East and Global Affairs Stelian Stoian told polchief that Romania would "probably consider something" once it understands the size and type of force organized and its mandate. Stoian said the debate spurred by the Prime Minister over Romania's Iraq contribution would have no bearing on a decision with regard to Lebanon or anywhere else. Overall he seemed somewhat positive. Stoian also asked what kind of contribution the U.S. was planning to contribute to such a force.

¶5. (C) MFA Director for the Middle East Laura Mircea told poloff that Romania is "extremely concerned with what happens in Lebanon and northern Israel." She said Romania "believes the international community can do something to bring an end to the crisis" and that "an international force would likely be necessary." She also mentioned the domestic situation regarding requests to withdraw troops from Iraq, but said there would be no such retreat. She said if there was an international force -- whether UN, EU, or NATO -- with a clear mandate accepted by Lebanon and Israel, Romania would consider participating. She cautioned, however, that the MOD "doesn't really have people" and she thought the likely contribution would be very low, probably under 200 troops.

¶6. (C) The social democratic opposition party's George Maior, President of the Senate's Defense Committee, told poloff that "if there was an international force, legitimized by NATO or

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the UN, Romania would be an active player." Maior said that PSD party leader Mircea Geoana commented about the possibility of President Bush asking President Basescu for a contribution of troops in Lebanon so that Basescu "would focus on real security issues" and "not be engaged in internal political disputes" such as those with the liberal party over troops in Iraq or over the resignations of the intelligence chiefs. Maior mentioned the sizeable financial problems in terms of the MOD budget. He said the budget for 2007-2008 is now at 1.7%, rather than at 2.38% "where it should have been" according to pre-NATO accession commitments. He said the MOD budget is "continuously decreasing," although he said he heard some discussions that would positively adjust it. In any case, he said, the government would allocate an extra amount should there be an international force that Romania would join in Lebanon. He estimated Romania could likely send 300-400 people for such an effort, and pledged that the opposition party would support such a contribution politically. He also estimated that PNL's campaign to withdraw from Iraq was not going well for them and that there were discussions within the party that the leadership had gone too far on that issue. He said that the Minister of Defense was in a difficult political situation and he would therefore not be able to afford "another radical stand" against deploying Romanian troops. Maior said that "if there is a UN mandate and a NATO umbrella, no one would complain" in Romania about contributing forces.

¶7. (C) Minister of Defense Teodor Atanasiu declared to the press on July 28 that "if the UN makes a request, we will get involved in Lebanon." He said that he would wait to see what the mission of such a peace-keeping force would be, and then "make an offer accordingly." On July 31, Atanasiu added in a televised interview that if Romania participated according to a UN request, "the UN would pay the bill, as Romania does not have the necessary resources." Atanasiu also announced that the Finance Ministry's draft 2007-2010 budget "would not be enough for the objectives of the Romanian Army, including those assumed within NATO." The draft budget gradually

reduces military expenditures from 1.7% of GDP in 2007 to 1.3% of GDP in 2010.

¶8. (C) Upon returning from his trip to the U.S., President Traian Basescu stated to the press that neither he nor anyone else had committed Romania to sending a peacekeeping force into Southern Lebanon, but that Romania would consider such action, preferably based on a mandate from the UN Security Council to enforce resolution 1559. The text regarding Lebanon of President Basescu's speech delivered upon arrival at Bucharest's Henry Coanda Airport is below:

¶9. (U) Begin embassy's rough partial translation of President Basescu's July 29 speech:

"...Our position is extremely clear: Romania acknowledges unequivocally Israel's right to security, a right defended on behalf of its citizens. I have underscored that Romania is interested in the evolution of the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, because we have a great number of citizens in Israel, plus their families, with Romanian or Israeli citizenship.

At this moment, there are discussions at all levels -- inside NATO structures, inside the UN, or even in the context of bilateral discussions -- on the possibility of introducing a military buffer structure in Southern Lebanon. Neither myself, the chief of the General Staff, nor any other member of our delegation (who visited the U.S.) ever committed Romania to participate with troops in such an action. From our point of view, Romania meets its commitments at the level established with our foreign partners, be they inside NATO, inside the EU, or within the framework of bilateral agreements.

We have to wait first for a decision on Lebanon. We would prefer a decision of the UNSC, as the organization with responsibilities in implementing its own resolutions, because -- as I have underlined in the discussions at all levels in the U.S. -- the actual situation is the result of the failure to implement the UNSC resolution 1559 from 2004, in its most sensitive areas, such as the disarmament of Hezbollah, the blocking of arms transfers to Southern Lebanon and securing the control of the whole territory of Lebanon by the Lebanese government. We think a UNSC resolution should be implemented and not a solution coming from NATO or other international structures or organizations.

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In this context, Romania has not yet made any commitment regarding the structure or type of mission, or the responsibilities assumed by each country regarding Southern Lebanon.

A NATO decision would take at least six to seven months to be enforced, given the decision making process inside NATO. In our opinion, the organization that can take quick decisions is the UNSC, which in the past made decisions regarding Southern Lebanon that have not been implemented, and the Lebanese government was not supported to implement the decisions related to the security of Southern Lebanon....

End text of embassy translation.

¶10. (C) Comment: The center-right Liberal Party's recent campaign to remove Romanian troops from Iraq appears to have introduced a measure of caution into Romanian officials' eagerness to commit troops to peacekeeping operations overseas. It does not, however, appear to be a decisive factor. Romanians are cautiously optimistic that they would participate in an internationally legitimized military buffer force in Southern Lebanon. The rapidly diminishing MOD budget, on the other hand, appears to be a major constraining force on Romania's ability to contribute to peacekeeping operations. End comment.

¶11. (U) Amembassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the SIPRNet website:
www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/bucharest
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